

Archaeological Resources Survey Report

Potranco Road Housing Development in west Bexar County, Texas

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Submitted to:

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Pedestrian Cultural Resource Survey for the Potranco Tract Located in Bexar County, Texas

INTRODUCTION

aci consulting conducted an intensive archaeological survey of 89 acres of land within the City of San Antonio's extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) in west Bexar County, Texas. Fieldwork was done on 17 and 18 October 2006. Standard Pacific of Texas, L.P. intends to carry out construction activities associated with residential development. Upon review by the City of San Antonio Planning Department, it was determined that a cultural resource survey of the area in accordance with the city's Historic Preservation and Design Section of the Unified Development Code (Article 6 35-630 to 35-634), should be conducted. The survey was conducted to determine what, if any, cultural resources were present and their eligibility for protected status in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or as State Archaeological Landmarks (SAL). As this project is on private land and there will be no state or federal reimbursement, no antiquities permit was required.

The western end of the project area follows the limit of the City of San Antonio's ETJ, which is delineated by an unpaved private ranch road. The northern and eastern boundaries are roughly defined by a curve in FM 1957 (Potranco Road). The southern limits of the area to be surveyed are defined by a property fence following a transmission line ROW running east-west. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) is restricted to private property within these boundaries and no jurisdictional streams or watersheds are included.

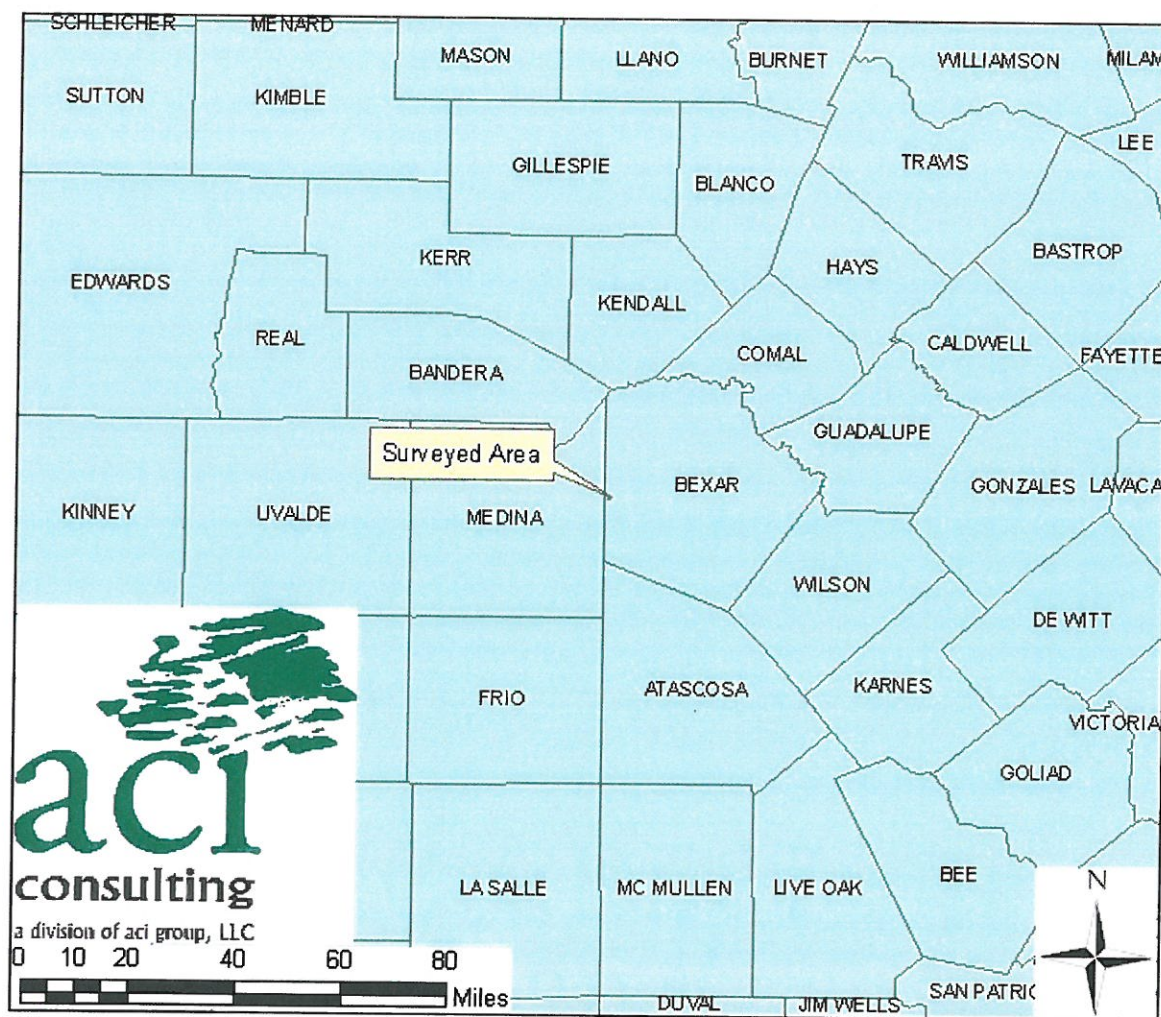


Figure 1. Central Texas.

BACKGROUND

Environmental Context

The survey area is located in western Bexar County, Texas (see figure 1) situated within the interior belt of the Coastal Plain of South Central Texas (Handbook of Texas Online, 2006) on the Edwards Plateau. Geographically, the area is an undulating upland area; this part of the plateau is dissected by low order tributaries draining into the San Antonio River (USDA 1966:1). The soils in the area are characterized by rocky clays formed in residuum from weathered limestone and chalk of the Glenrose Formation. Two major soil types were identified in the survey area: Anhalt clay and Eckrant cobbly clay (NRCS Online Soil Survey, 2006). The Anhalt series consists of moderately deep, well drained,

very slowly permeable thermic Leptic Udic Haplusterts that formed in residuum over limestone bedrock. The soils are on nearly level to gently sloping uplands. Slopes in the survey area dominated by Anhalt clays range from 0 to 1 percent. The Eckrant series consists of very shallow and shallow, well drained, moderately slow permeable soils formed in residuum over interbedded limestone, marls and chalk. Slopes in the survey area dominated by Eckrant cobbly clay range from 1 to 5 percent (NRCS Online Soil Survey, 2006).

Modern land use is rangeland for cattle and horses. Native vegetation is post oak savannah, typical for this part of the Edwards Plateau, including live oak, Texas persimmon, flameleaf sumac, mountain laurel, algerita, pricklypear, curlymesquite, Texas wintergrass, little bluestem, sideoats grama, and fall witchgrass. Approximately half of the survey area has been grazed and cleared for decades with excellent ground surface visibility.



ITEM INTENTIONALLY OMITTED



Figure 2. USGS 7.5" La Coste NE Quad, Bexar County, Texas.

Cultural History

Archaeological research suggests that Bexar County has been continuously inhabited by humans for over 10,000 years. European settlers from Spain and Germany have inhabited the region since the late 17th century. Records from early expeditions identify the indigenous peoples who occupied this area as Coahuiltecans, Tonkawas, and Lipan Apaches (Handbook of Texas Online, 2006).

The Texas Archaeological Sites Atlas lists 2278 previously recorded cemeteries, historic and prehistoric archaeological sites, and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)

properties in Bexar County. Eight archaeological sites have been previously recorded in the vicinity of the area surveyed (see figure 2). These sites are summarized on Table 1.

Table 1. Previously recorded archaeological sites in the area.

Trinomial	Time_Period	Site_Type	Landform	Intact
41BX1397	prehistoric	lithic scatter	hilltop	10%
41BX1398	prehistoric	lithic scatter	toeslope	10%
41BX1399	prehistoric	lithic scatter	ridgeslope	25%
41BX1400	prehistoric	lithic scatter	ridgeslope	25%
41BX1401	historic	farmstead	ridgetop	40%
41BX1402	prehistoric	lithic scatter	ridgetop	10%
41BX1403	prehistoric	lithic scatter	ridgeslope	10%
41BX1428	Late Archaic	burned rock midden	terrace	60%

Sites 41BX1399, 1400, 1402, 1403 were recorded in the spring of 2000 on a ridgeline just 1-2 miles north of the survey area. All four sites were vaguely defined lithic scatters devoid of any diagnostic artifacts. 41BX1401 was also found on the same gently sloping ridge and was recorded as a historic farmstead of mid-twentieth century age. The site was originally recorded in 2000, along with the four prehistoric sites mentioned above, and again in 2006 before being dismantled for the Redbird Ranch housing development.

Sites 41BX1397 and 1398 were recorded on the same landform as the surveyed area in 2006 and 2000, respectively. At the time of recording the sites were poorly defined lithic scatters. A projectile point fragment was recovered from 41BX1397, but was too incomplete to suggest the time period of the site. 41BX1398 was recorded as having a component of fire cracked rock, but no features that could suggest habitation were observed. Neither of the sites was determined to have NRHP or SAL eligibility, nor was further investigation recommended.

The only site in the vicinity that was recorded as being in good condition, and was recommended for further investigation, was the "Young Site" (41BX1428) approximately one and a half miles east of the surveyed area. It was originally recorded in 1998 as a 40m by 56m Late Archaic site on a stream terrace of Potranco Creek. A 5m wide burned rock midden was observed eroding out of the terrace into the creek. Testing was conducted at the site that indicated the site has a high potential to yield cultural and paleoenvironmental information, and a block excavation was recommended for the future.

METHODOLOGY

An intensive archaeological survey was conducted within the APE to locate any previously unrecorded sites and to assess the potential for adverse effect for these sites. A 100% pedestrian survey of all areas within the APE was conducted to locate any archeological or historical sites that were visible on the ground surface and areas that may have contained buried cultural deposits. Survey methods were in compliance with THC/Council of Texas Archaeologists (CTA) survey standards for project areas less than 100 acres in size.

Had surficial sites been encountered, a random sample of artifacts would have been field-identified to quantify the density of the scatter and the types of artifacts present. Non-diagnostic artifacts would not have been collected during any part of the survey.

There was a possibility that historical sites existed within the APE. General Land Office Plat maps were used in conjunction with United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps to determine property boundaries and the potential location of historical sites. If any historical sites had been found within the APE, then archival research would have been conducted to determine the nature and chronology of the occupation. All newly discovered historical sites are recorded at the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory (TARL), and those sites are assessed for potential significance.

The procedure for delineation of discovered sites is determined by CTA standards. If surface visibility is less than 30 percent at these sites, then a minimum of six shovel tests are excavated to delimit site boundaries. Based on the results of the shovel tests and surface inspection, the newly recorded sites would be evaluated for potential significance.

Standard shovel tests (ST) are 30 cm in diameter and were excavated to the bottom of Holocene deposits when possible, or a maximum of 50 cm of sterile sediment containing no artifacts where Holocene deposits were too deep to be excavated by hand. The shovel tests were dug in levels no thicker than 20 cm, and the excavated sediments were screened through ¼-inch hardware cloth.

The total size of the APE was approximately 89 acres. The minimum survey standards implemented by the THC require at least 1 shovel test per 2 acres wherever ground surface visibility is less than 30 percent, on slopes less than 20 percent.



FINDINGS

No cultural resources were observed during the pedestrian survey, nor were any artifacts recovered from shovel testing. Approximately three quarters of the survey area had surface visibility greater than 30%. There was evidence for clearing and woodcutting activities throughout the surveyed area, likely associated with pasturage. Surface visibility conditions in areas dominated by Eckrant cobbly clay, in the southern and western portions of the APE, were poorer than in the central and eastern portion where Anhalt clays were predominant. A modern trash scatter was observed near ST 7 that was approximately 30 m by 70 m and associated with a deer stand and a recently used fire pit. There were some ceramic and bottle glass fragments mixed in with the modern material that could have been manufactured at any time within the twentieth century, but there were very few (less than 10) fragments and none were large enough to be diagnostic. The ceramic fragments were all industrial whiteware, and the bottle glass likewise showed industrial mold marks. There were no structures indicated on the USGS topographic maps to suggest that there was a historic farmhouse in the area. No structures or foundations were observed during the pedestrian survey, either. The absence of any historic homestead evidence, along with its context within the modern hunting camp, strongly suggests that the ceramic and glass content of the scatter is modern, as well.

The remaining, approximately 20-25% of the tract was subsurface tested for the presence of buried material and/or cultural horizons. No artifacts were recovered, and most soil profiles conformed to USDA soil series descriptions. Shovel testing was dug to the maximum depth of Holocene deposits in all cases, except for ST 3-6, 8, 21, 25, and 26. ST 21 was a light grayish brown sandy loam which does not conform to the Eckrant clay that was identified in neighboring shovel tests. ST 3-6, 8, 25, and 26 were all dug in the central portion of the surveyed area where deep Anhalt clay predominates. As none of the ST's were positive for cultural materials, ST's in this area were terminated at least 20 cm below the A/B boundary (40-50 cm below surface).

DISCUSSION

There were very few chert nodules observed during the survey, which would be an essential resource for prehistoric peoples living in the area. The only prehistoric site in the vicinity that was determined to be intact and have potential for further study was the Young Site, found on a stream terrace along Potranco Creek. The other, less intact, prehistoric sites in the area were found on deflated rock outcrops along a ridgeline to the north. The upland setting of the surveyed area was not well suited to preserving archaeological sites in good condition. Preservation and site integrity are very important to determining NRHP eligibility. There were no cultural resources that could be deemed eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (36 CFR 60) or for designation as a State Archeological Landmark (13 TAC 26). No further investigation in this area is warranted.

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